

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington D. C. 20554

In the Matter of)
Digital Audio Broadcasting Systems) MM Docket 99-325
NRSC-5 Proposed Standard - IBOC)

Comments of Robert Foxworth, a private individual

I have 25 years' experience in the broadcasting industry and am at present a member of the SBE. I am not employed by, nor do I represent any third party, or other participant in this proceeding, nor do I have any financial interest in its outcome.

My comments are directed at the question of implementing IBOC on the medium-wave AM broadcasting band.

I believe that any action by the FCC to approve permanent usage of IBOC technology on the AM Broadcast band would ultimately be shown to be counter to the long term interests of both listeners and broadcasters, especially the smaller ones. Other respondents make a compelling technical case against IBOC and I just add here that I support them.

Other comments make a strong case for the careful examination, by the Commission, of alternative methods of implementing digital transmission, and I urge the FCC to examine those other methods.

Adoption of the proposal for AM IBOC will create -

1. a loss of credibility in FCC rulemaking matters. The Rules presently address limits in adjacent channel interference, and require separations in station frequency assignments in any given market. Usage of IBOC creates both a violation of adjacent-channel interference levels, as well as effectively reducing present separations. Procedural ways in which these would be effectively voided, in order to accommodate the much greater bandwidth of the IBOC hybrid signal, would be done in spite of technical and physical parameters which cannot be changed legislatively. Changing these separations and limits creates the impression that previously legislated limits had little innate validity.

2. a loss of credibility in FCC rulemaking matters, by adoption of a proprietary system, subject to licensing fees, contrary to the concept of open standards, such as the development of NTSC television which was available for use by any broadcaster, subject only to obtaining the required equipment.

3. a loss of credibility in FCC rulemaking matters, by adoption of a system that gives un-equal protection to all licensees, based on technical issues being imposed ex-post-facto. These issues typically include antenna tuning parameters, transmitter linearity and bandwidth etc. It is one thing for a licensee to survey these costs up-front when building or upgrading any

facility and make a business decision on this information. But imposition of these changed requirements, needed to compete successfully in a post-IBOC market, would unequally deny an entire class of station the ability to be competitive based on the inability of these stations to successfully upgrade their plant, whether for technical or economic reasons. The root cause of this is the cost and effort needed to upgrade many AM plants, which could be economically unattractive for many stations.

4 - a loss of credibility in being unresponsive to Homeland Security matters. High-power clear frequency AM broadcasting, especially at night, is an in-place, low-tech, widely dispersed mechanism to allow instantaneous multicast messaging (one sender, many recipients) to get information to a vast audience in the event of a disaster. We previously commented on the August 2003 power blackout in the North-East, in which a great number of people depended on battery-operated receivers to get information, as all local media, internet, telephone/cell phone was totally down. With the continued elevated threat to the homeland, which seems to be a long term issue we face, it would be simply irresponsible to the Nation's welfare to dismantle this capability.

Adoption of IBOC would (a) eliminate the existing receiver pool and (b) eliminate the existing pool of candidate transmitters and near receive frequencies. The claims of some of the existing AM broadcasters who state they wish to serve only their local in-city areas are in conflict with this goal and represent a short-sightedness that should not be encouraged. The basis for this statement is the unreliability of possible skywave nighttime IBOC service due to propagation behavior that is nondestructive to analog AM reception, in terms of information throughput.

5 - a perception that the FCC may be seen by some as encouraging market-driven economic issues at the expense of technical issues in deciding matters such as the present matter.

I believe there has been a showing that serious issues remain in the question of whether night (or any) AM IBOC should be made permanent, better that I could do, and I hope that these comments will illustrate some collateral issues I think are worthy of also being considered.

Respectfully submitted

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